

Overholser Family Association



Bulletin

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VOLUME I NUMBER 1

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

At the 1978 Reunion of the Overholser Family Association the group authorized the publication of two issues of some sort of a periodical; the initial designation is "Bulletin." As you can see on the masthead above, this is the first issue; working out the details of the first two issues was left in my hands. To my knowledge, and I have reviewed all of the minutes of the meetings of our association beginning with the first reunion in 1906, a newsletter or bulletin of any kind has never been published before.

What is the purpose of a bulletin? Do we have noteworthy information to disseminate? What should be considered worthwhile? etc., etc. Of course one of the reasons would be to disseminate information concerning our association members and their ancestors which is of interest to the many members of our clan who are scattered throughout the United States. At present I feel that we could use this bulletin to obtain further information on our immigrant Samuel and the first several generations of his descendants. When I did further research last year for my article on the first four generations of the Terre Hill Oberholtzers, which was published in the April issue of the "Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage", I realized some information is still available regarding these generations in the hands of some of the older living descendants. With this in mind at least part of our effort should be directed toward gathering such information.

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SWISS OBERHOLZERS VISIT U.S.A.

Rosy Oberholzer and her daughter Johanna visited the U.S. in May and June 1978. The Oberholzer family operates a restaurant and ski lift in the village of Oberholz, Switzerland, which is about 40 miles east of Zurich. This was the first trip to the U.S. for either of the ladies and they indicated that they enjoyed their stay. Rosy stayed three weeks with Ruth and Spencer Overholser in Oley Valley, but Johanna stayed only 12 days after which she reported for previously arranged employment in Texas.

It is not known whether immigrant Samuel was a relative of Rosy's family, however, in writing about immigrant Samuel several sources have indicated that his ancestors came from the village of Oberholz. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we found out that there really is a relationship?

FIRST REUNION JULY 26, 1906

(excerpts from description of the first reunion)

"No one could choose a more beautiful and appropriate spot for a family reunion than the little island in the Conestoga Creek, near Terre Hill, --- a permanent organization was made with Martin L. Overholser, Millersville, Pa., as president, and Charles E. Overholser, Brooklyn, N.Y., as secretary. --- After a bountiful

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OVERHOLSER FAMILY ASSOCIATION
BULLETIN

Volume 1 - Number 1

Editor

J. Spencer Overholser

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COLUMN-cont. from page 1)

Inasmuch as I perhaps have more genealogical information, including lists of names, in my possession than any other person regarding immigrant Samuel's descendants it would be best for anyone submitting information relative thereto to me at Box 106, Oley, Pa. 19547. For those of you who have not been to the reunions to review the association records the April 1978 issue of the "Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage", available from the Lancaster Conference Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, Pa. 17602 for \$2.50, will give you some concept of the type of information in the association files.

You will find reference to immigrant Samuel a number of places in this bulletin; this refers to the Samuel Oberholtzer who arrived on the ship "Molly" on September 30, 1727 at Philadelphia, Pa. and died on May 2, 1748 in Lancaster, Pa. So that you will be able to identify the subsequent generations in this bulletin you will find that II Martin refers to the son of immigrant Samuel, that III Martin refers to the grandson of immigrant Samuel, etc.

At this point, I want to put out an appeal for an editor of this bulletin for next year (I promised only to be an interim editor); some of the details of the responsibilities of the editor could be approved at the annual reunion on August 25th so it would be best for the new editor to be present

at the next reunion but not absolutely necessary. Since I have most of the genealogical records regarding immigrant Samuel's descendants it would be best for the new editor to reside in eastern Penna., New Jersey or in this general vicinity, but this would not be necessary either because the editor could compile the information for the bulletin via the postal service.

The first two issues of the bulletin will be financed by the treasury of the Overholser Family Association, as approved at the last reunion, and these first two issues will be mailed to those on the present mailing list, which comprises about 200 names. The details for financing future issues should be decided at the next annual meeting, which will be held on the day of the reunion at Terre Hill, Pa. on August 25, 1979.

It has been customary to "pass the hat" at each reunion to help defray the expenses of the association, which amount to principally printing and mailing expenses. The people attending the reunions, except for a very few others who sent in contributions by mail, have been financing the association. This system has been in effect as long as I have been attending reunions, which began with the 1951 reunion. If anyone desires to contribute, make the check payable to the Overholser Family Association and mail it to the treasurer: Mr. Robert M. Oberholser, R.D. No. 2, Ardena, Freehold, New Jersey 07728. The treasurer presents an oral report at each annual meeting so the treasurers report could be published in the bulletin. Let's look for that in the future.

This is my first venture as an editor so I welcome your comments regarding this issue and any assistance in preparing the next issue.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for Vol. 1 No. 2 of this bulletin is July 2nd. All copy submitted for publication will be considered but will not necessarily be included in the next issue.



1978 REUNION

The 68th annual reunion was held August 26, 1978 in Terre Hill Memorial Park, Terre Hill, Pa. The states of Indiana, New Jersey, Virginia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania were represented by the 67 people present. Several families, as usual, attended who are not descendants of immigrant Samuel; our annual reunion is open to all branches of Oberholtzers, Overholser, etc. since there apparently is no other sort of general reunion for persons interested in all lines.

The main feature of the program which followed the covered dish noon meal was a report by John L. Overholt of Kilmarnock, Va. regarding his current research. This research includes any of the Oberholtzer, Overholt, Oberholzer, Overholser etc. lines inasmuch as he is attempting to trace back to his immigrant. (See page for a further report on his research.)

Individuals present were given an opportunity to make comments. Of special interest was the presence of Henry Oberholtzer, son of the late Rev. Isaiah E. Oberholtzer of Trotwood, Ohio. The Rev. Oberholtzer undoubtedly compiled more information on immigrant Samuel's (1727) descendants than any other person. Most of this information, which is mainly

a listing of immigrant Samuel's descendants, is in the hands of your president; it will be deposited in the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society library when properly organized.

Others in attendance away from Pa. and N.J. were the Paul Deans of Richmond, Ind., the Weston LeBarers of Durham, N.C. and the John Overholts of Kilmarnock, Va.

The president appointed the following persons to be responsible for genealogical research of specific branches: Mildred Pettigrew, Pottstown, Pa., descendants of IV Daniel (son of III Martin); Robert Oberholser, Freehold, N.J., descendants of IV Christian (son of III Martin); Spencer Overholser, Oley, Pa., descendants of IV John (son of III Martin); and Henry Oberholtzer, Summitville, Ind., descendants of IV Samuel (son of III Christian). These four researchers will report their findings at the 1979 reunion.

The officers elected, each for a one year term, are listed on the back sheet of this bulletin.

A motion was passed to hold the 1979 reunion on Saturday, August 25th at the same location.

OVERHOLSER FAMILY ASSOCIATION COAT OF ARMS

Through the years a number of people, especially in the Oberholtzer "Freundschaft", have requested information regarding the coat of arms which appears on page 1 of this bulletin. This is briefly the background.

For years prior to the annual reunion of the clan in 1958 requests had been made to "adopt" a coat of arms for the Overholser Family Association. The group had been informed that in doing so would not actually constitute a coat of arms because a coat of arms is granted to a person and not to a family. Some members of the clan stated that a coat of arms could be used on stationary, hung as a decoration, etc.

Due to these requests the late Dr. Winfred Overholser, then Supt. of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., had several conversations with Hans Klaui of the Genealogical Investigation Office in Oberwinterthur, Switzerland. Subsequently thereto Spencer Overholser corresponded with Dr. Klaui which led to Dr. Klaui recommending the coat of arms as follows: "Diagonally divided in blue and silver. In blue an oblique rightward crescent moon, in the upper corner accompanied by a golden star. In silver two green, re-trunked firs on swaying green ground. (Heraldically left-right from the observer and opposite.) ----- ostrich feathers are to be considered as a crest. Four of them in the colors blue, silver, blue and gold should be enough."

As a result of this recommendation a motion was passed at the reunion on August 15, 1958 at Long's Park, Lancaster, Pa. to adopt this as the coat of arms.

Emphasis is again placed on the fact that this is really not a coat of arms because a coat of arms is granted to a person, not to a family.

OBERHOLTZER RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you are an Oberholtzer, Overhold, Overholser, Overhult or variation of them and have been searching for your early ancestors, consider this an invitation to pool your information with others who are also trying to form a solid genealogy of the family. The name originated with the village of Oberholz in Switzerland and some of the family migrated to Germany as early as 1540. The name existed in several places in Germany and there is a possibility that more than one family migrated to Germany before coming to America.

Loomis' notes in his genealogy of Jacob Oberholtzer stated that he arrived on 22 February 1702 but this needs verification. Martin and Michael apparently came as part of the German Palatinate migration in 1709 from Rotterdam to London and then to America in 1710 where their names are in an agreement to buy 10,000 acres in (now) Lancaster county from Penn's commissioners. Their names do not appear again. However, Marcus Oberholtzer was in the first group of 854 in London and was established on a farm in Coventry township, Chester Co. in 1717. David Hall of Boonville, Mo. has established connections between Marcus' family and the Fretz genealogy of Martin Oberholtzer (1706-1744). Martin's wife Agnes (Kolb) remarried after his death to William Nash and their daughter Elizabeth married another Martin Overholt (who signed his will Oberholtzer) who was "the son of an earlier Overholt", this family is in the Fretz "Nash Family" and "Fretz Family" genealogies. Christian obtained a warrant for 100 acres in Richland twp., Bucks county in 1739. Arrivals after 1717 from Pennsylvania Archives, Rupp and Strassburger were Samuel (1727), John (dead on arrival in 1727), Hans Jacob with wife Catherine and son Heinrich (1730), Jacob with Samuel, age 3 and Elizabeth, age 6 (1732), Henry (1739) John Michael (1739), and Hans George (1754). Genealogies of Samuel by Spencer Overholser and of the Hans Jacob family by Roach have been published. The legend of seven Oberholtzer brothers may be true but the latter arrivals must be of a later generation in Europe.

Tracing a single line back was found to be frustrating because of the repeated use of the same given names--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Martin, Marcus, Barbara, Magdelene, Elizabeth, etc. and because the families moved to the frontier every generation or so without leaving clear trails. Hence a card file was set up and notes are being taken on all of the families when found in libraries, archives, or court records. Photocopies of the oldest documents are being assembled. By exchanging information with others, many new sources have been uncovered. Cooperators are David Hall, Boonville, Mo., Grace Milligan, Kansas City, Mo., Spencer Overholser, Oley, Pa., Osmund Fretz, Sellersville, Pa., Pauline Cassel, Bedminster, Pa., Joe Overholt, Uniontown, O., and John L. Overholt, Rt.1, Box 173, Kilmarnock, Va. 22482, who is acting coordinator of the research in progress. Information on the early members of the family in America in the 1700-1800 period especially is sought. If you have traced your family back to this period, your input is desired, especially copies of Bible records, account books, wills, land titles, tax records or early militia (or Non-Associator) data. These are to be tied to census records of 1790 and 1800 and to other genealogies.

Plans now being followed are to retrace the earlier genealogies to see what new data can be added and then, where warranted, to prepare a text on each immigrant and his family; the resulting text to be picked apart by the most knowledgeable of the cooperators and thereby obtain a carefully edited version for publication. Steps are being taken to see if there are records of the emigrants in Germany and Switzerland and information is requested if you know such searches have been made before. To aid in this coordinated effort a newsletter is being started by Spencer Overholser, Box 106, Oley, Pa. 19547 for the Overholser Family Association which meets annually in August at Terre Hill, Pa.

Records were examined in the following places in the last 18 months but the search was not exhaustive in any place and all could be revisited with profit:

Library of Congress, National Archives, D.A.R. Library in Washington, D.C.; courthouses in Philadelphia, Doylestown, and West Chester, Pa.; the Ducks Co., Pa., Montgomery Co., Pa., Maryland and Pennsylvania historical society libraries; libraries of William and Mary College, Williamsburg, Va., Duke University, Durham, N.C.; Maryland and Virginia state libraries; the Genealogical Library of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; and in London, England, the Public Records Office at Chancery Lane, and Kew, the Friends Meeting Archives (Euston) and the Admiralty records in Greenwich. Mennonite libraries in Lancaster, Pa., Eastern Mennonite College, Madison, Va., and Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa. were particularly helpful.

As Mr. John L. Ruth of Harleysville, Pa. says, "Piecing together the picture of these pioneers is perforce a group effort, and every contribution counts." All correspondence will be answered as promptly as possible.

----- Submitted by John L. Overholt, Rt. 1, Box 173, Kilmarnock, Va. 22482.

(John L. Overholt is a native of Iowa. Graduated from Iowa State & Lehigh in Chem. Eng. He was a research investigator for N.J. Zinc Co. for 20 yrs. He then became an Operations Research analyst in Operations Evaluation Group, later the Center for Naval Analyses, under M.I.T., Franklin Institute, and U of Rochester. After 20 years in Wash., D.C. and on military staffs as a civilian in U.S. and abroad, Peg and John now live on Chesapeake Bay where they enjoy gardening, the wild life and colonial history.)

Those of you who remember our distinguished former president Dr. Winfred Overholser, who was president 1939-1956, will be interested to know that his widow Dorothy and daughter Jane Elliot of Sacramento, Calif. make occasional visits to the East to visit friends and relatives and, incidentally to pursue a bit further their interest in the Overholser genealogy. In their month's trip last fall they included a visit with Ruth and Spencer Overholser at their place in Oley Valley. Many pleasant hours were spent chatting family history and some interesting side trips were made to old church cemeteries in Lancaster County, Pa. for further clues regarding immigrant Samuel's descendants.

(Continued from page 1)

repast, spread on rustic tables under magnificent shade trees, the whole company repaired to another part of the small island, where a few hours were spent in the delight of song and conversation. Mr. John Overholser of Philadelphia, an accomplished vocalist sang a selection from the oratorio "Elijah", the German song "Die Nachtigall" and other charming songs. --- It is safe to say that this little island has never before been the scene of so much social pleasure. The oldest representative of the family present was Mr. Isaac Stirk of Lancaster. The youngest was Donald M. Overholser of Millersville.

OFFICERS

- President - J. Spencer Overholser, Oley, Pa.
- 1st Vice Pres. - John L. Oberholser, Narvon, Pa.
- 2nd Vice Pres. - Harold Barr, Lancaster, Pa.
- Corresponding Sec'y. - Elizabeth Oberholser Frey, Freehold, N.J.
- Recording Sec'y - Paul Pletcher, New Holland, Pa.
- Treasurer - Robert Oberholser, Freehold, N.J.
- Chaplain - Rev. John Weiler, Easton, Pa.

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